



# CENTRAL ASIAN JOURNAL OF LITERATURE, PHILOSOPHY AND CULTURE

eISSN: 2660-6828 | Volume: 04 Issue: 02 Feb 2023

<https://cajlp.centralasianstudies.org>

## Stress Factors During Simultaneous Translation

*Burkutova Farangiz*

*Master student of Samarkad State Institute of Foreign Languages*

*Received 25<sup>th</sup> Dec 2022, Accepted 24<sup>th</sup> Jan 2023, Online 6<sup>th</sup> Feb 2023*

---

### ANNOTATION

This paper explores the various stress factors affecting simultaneous interpreters while they are performing their job. Factors such as cognitive load, language complexity, the influence of emotions and the physical environment, and the impact of fatigue on the interpreter's performance are discussed. It is obvious that simultaneous interpreters are under a considerable amount of stress while performing their job and that this stress can have a detrimental effect on the quality of their work. It is suggested that further research into the causes and effects of stress on simultaneous interpreters is needed in order to develop appropriate strategies to reduce the negative effects of stress.

**KEYWORDS:** simultaneous translation, environmental stress, empirical stress, physiological stress, stress tolerance, concentration, booth, cognitive load, language complexity, emotions, physical environment, fatigue

### I. INTRODUCTION

Conference interpreters work under conditions which psychologists generally consider to involve objective stress factors: the constant information load, the time factor, the tremendous amount of concentration required, fatigue, the confined environment of the booth, and others. They are responsible for conveying the source language into the target language in real time and with a high degree of accuracy. This is a highly demanding task that requires the interpreter to be able to think quickly, process large amounts of information, and make decisions in a split second. As a result, interpreters are exposed to a large number of stressors while they are performing their job. Several empirical studies have confirmed that simultaneous interpreting is indeed a high-stress occupation. This paper will explore the various stress factors that affect simultaneous interpreters, and discuss the potential impact of these factors on the quality of the interpreter's work.

### II. MAIN PART

There is general agreement among conference interpreters that their profession is a very demanding one. It requires a maximum of attention and concentration over prolonged periods of time. The need to cope with different (often highly difficult) subjects, different speakers and accents, the possibility of failure at all times

are among the factors that are generally regarded as contributing to stress. The literature abounds with intuitive statements to that stress is intrinsic to interpreting:

“When he interprets, the interpreter is under pressure”, “[...] stress is held to be an important factor in interpreting, “Simultaneous interpreting is a highly complex discourse performance [...] where language perception, comprehension, translation and production operations are carried out virtually in parallel and under severe time pressure. the task [...] is likely to create a heavy processing load”.

There are several stress factors which can be seen during the interpretation. For instance:

**Cognitive Load.** The cognitive load experienced by simultaneous interpreters is one of the most significant stressors. The interpreter must be able to understand and interpret the source language in real time, which requires them to process a large amount of information quickly. This can be a challenging task, especially when the source language is complex or when the interpreter is unfamiliar with the topic. Additionally, the interpreter must also be able to recall and interpret words and phrases from memory, which can be difficult if the interpreter’s linguistic knowledge is limited.

**Language Complexity.** The complexity of the source language can also contribute to the stress experienced by simultaneous interpreters. Interpreters must be able to accurately interpret the source language into the target language, which can be difficult if the language is unfamiliar or contains complex structures or nuances. Additionally, the interpreter must also be able to interpret colloquialisms and idioms, which can be challenging if the interpreter is unfamiliar with the culture.

**The Influence of Emotions.** The emotions of the speaker can also have a significant impact on the stress experienced by the interpreter. If the speaker is angry or agitated, the interpreter must be able to interpret their words accurately while also conveying the emotion of the speaker. This can be difficult for interpreters, especially if they are not familiar with the speaker’s cultural background. Additionally, the interpreter must also be able to remain emotionally neutral while interpreting, which can be challenging if the interpreter is emotionally invested in the topic.

**The Physical Environment.** Environmental (physical) stressors include such factors as temperature, humidity and air quality. Some of the earliest stress studies investigated the impact of the work environment or, more precisely, temperature, humidity and air quality in the booth (Kurz 1981, 1983a, 1983b, Kurz and Kolmer 1984). There were major inadequacies with regard to temperature, relative humidity and CO<sub>2</sub> levels. While the applicable ISO standard recommends a temperature comfort zone of 18-22°C, this range was exceeded in 100% of the booths in which measurements were carried out. The average in-booth temperature at the end of a conference was 26.4°C. Additionally, the interpreter must be able to maintain their composure in difficult situations, such as when the speaker is speaking too quickly or when the audience is interrupting the speaker.

Physiological stress Researchers have also started looking at physiological stress parameters as objective signs of stress. (For an overview of physiological stress responses see Zeier 1997.) Tommola and Hyönä

(1990) measured the variations in mental load during simultaneous interpreting and two other language processing tasks (listening and shadowing) by means of pupillometry and found that SI was associated with the highest dilation levels. Klonowicz (1991) examined changes in effort during a day's work in the booth. Blood pressure and heart rate were measured immediately before and immediately after 30-minute shifts, showing more pronounced elevations with the duration of work.

**The Impact of Fatigue.** Fatigue can also have a significant impact on the stress experienced by simultaneous interpreters. If the interpreter is fatigued, it can be difficult for them to concentrate and interpret accurately. Additionally, fatigue can lead to mistakes and misinterpretations, which can lead to negative feedback from the audience. That is why there are usually two interpreters in one booth and they take turns interpreting in 25-30 minutes so that they don't get tired. Unfortunately, in some cases organizers hire only one interpreter for the whole conference or meeting. It may not bring any kind of difficulties for professional interpreters but not for novices. "Unlike conference interpreters, novices/student interpreters cannot rely on extensive experience. They still grapple with numerous difficulties (background knowledge, comprehension, concentration, *décalage*, finding equivalents, keeping up with the speaker, etc). Therefore, what has become a routine situation for experienced interpreters is likely to constitute a highly stressful event for student interpreters.

### III. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, Stress depends on the complex relation between the individual and the environment. Furthermore, it depends on the subjective evaluation of the event, which is also linked with past experience. Uncontrollable or unpredictable events are more stressful than controllable or predictable ones. Simultaneous interpreters are under a considerable amount of stress while performing their job. This stress can have a detrimental effect on the quality of the interpreter's work, as errors and misinterpretations can have significant consequences. It is therefore important that further research is conducted into the causes and effects of stress on simultaneous interpreters, in order to develop appropriate strategies to reduce the negative effects of stress.

"Furthermore, interpretation courses should be designed in such a way as to facilitate the acquisition of productive interpreting strategies. As coping tactics are a fundamental skill in interpreting, they should be taught within the framework of practical exercises" [2]. Only after training and experience they can acquire the combination of greater knowledge and better strategies, the ability to process larger segments which allows the interpreter to adopt the right strategy quickly, sometimes automatically.

### References:

1. Gile D. (1995): *Basic Concepts and Models for Interpreter and Translator Training*, Amsterdam-Philadelphia, John Benjamins.
2. Henderson J.A. (1987): *Personality and the Linguist*, Bradford, Bradford University Press.

3. Klonowicz T. (1991): "The Effort of Simultaneous Interpretation: It's Been a Hard Day...", FIT Newsletter X/4, pp. 446-457.
4. Kurz I. (1981): "Temperatures in Interpreters' Booths – A Hot Iron?", AIIC Bulletin IX/4, pp. 39-43.
5. Kurz I. (1983a): "Temperatures Inside and Outside Booths – A Comparative Study", AIIC Bulletin XI/2, pp. 67-72.
6. Kurz I. (1983b): "CO2 and O2 Levels in Booths at the End of a Conference Day – A Pilot Study", AIIC Bulletin XI/3, pp. 86-93.
7. Kurz I. and Kolmer H. (1984): "Humidity and Temperature Measurements in Booths", AIIC Bulletin XII/2, pp. 42-43.
8. Moser-Mercer B. (2000): "The rocky road to expertise in interpreting: Eliciting knowledge from learners", in *Translationswissenschaft. Festschrift für Mary Snell-Hornby zum*, pp. 339-352.
9. Seleskovitch D. (1978): *Interpreting for International Conferences*, Washington, D.C., Pen and Booth.
10. Tommola J. and Hyönä J. (1990): "Mental load in listening, speech shadowing and simultaneous interpreting: A pupillometric study", in *Foreign Language Comprehension and Production*. Ed. by J. Tommola, Turku, AfinLA, pp. 179-188.
11. Zeier H. (1997): "Psychophysiological stress research", *Interpreting* 2/1-2, pp. 231-249.